

Steve Terhune

From: Craig Henry
Sent: Monday, August 9, 2021 11:20 AM
To: Steven BerkheiserGmail; James Donahower; Keith Weidenhof; Kelly Zuzic; Lyons, Kevin; Stuart Snyder; Tatur, Heather ; Thomas Serpico; Scott Waters; Zoladz, Scott
Cc: Steve Terhune; Megan Vile; Ibenson@bskb-law.com
Subject: FW: Mask Letter

All,

Kevin has asked that I forward the below. If anyone has concerns regarding Kevin signing this letter please contact him at your earliest convenience.

Craig

Governor Murphy

The undersigned school districts representing a majority of Ocean County are focused on the health and safety of our students, staff, and community. We've taken steps to protect our teachers and staff by making the vaccine available for those that wanted it, we have invested significantly in PPE, infrastructure improvements, and training to return to full-day instruction. In many ways, you have entrusted the districts with this responsibility by providing a framework for our districts reopening plan but allowing districts to operate within the individuality of our community.

We have partnered with our local union leadership to create clear and solid plans based on our local data. What started as a way to help the community and staff understand how decisions are made when planning virtual or in-person learning, the decision matrix has evolved to best support the children, staff, and families of our district. Now it can help in our decisions on screening and PPE requirements. Allow us to continue to lead our community out of this.

As the number of vaccinated individuals increases here in Ocean County, we continue to monitor the data in our individual towns. Our daily case count continues to be significantly lower than in the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year.

While we realize this situation is fluid, we again are ready to continue steps to get us closer to normal. As of now, executive order 251, as well as the recommendation by the CDC, on masks requires those in schools to continue wearing masks. **As always, our districts will operate in compliance with all state mandates.**

However, we believe we are at a point when the state policy regarding students and staff wearing masks at school – both indoors and outdoors – could be responsibly re-evaluated. In Ocean County we support a consideration for masks to be left to the local school district administration– as long as data continues to trend in the right direction. We base our position on the latest local and federal data, as well as the proactive steps we've taken to increase vaccination rates in our school communities. We believe we could safely take the next big step in getting back to normal. Within our respective reopening plans we urge you to allow districts to

decide if masks are a **necessity** based on local data. We welcome state leadership's support in choosing responsible data driven metrics that will enable our local school districts to make the best decision for their local community.